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**Contact: Martha Lozada
202-546-0008
Chris Barron
202-297-9807**

The Latino Coalition Concludes Hugely Successful Summit

– Rudy Giuliani, Senator Ken Salazar, Actress Maria Conchita Alonso, Commerce Secretary Carlos Gutierrez, Transportation Secretary Mary Peters, Congressman Luis Gutierrez, White House Briefing and Presidential Straw Poll among Highlights of Summit –

Washington, D.C. – The Latino Coalition (TLC) yesterday concluded its 2007 Small Business Economic Summit in Washington, D.C. “This year’s summit was our most successful ever,” said TLC President Robert G. Deposada. “The success of this year’s summit is a testament to the growing influence of Latinos in American politics and in the American economy.”

Hundreds of Latino business leaders gathered at the Four Seasons in Washington, D.C. for the two day summit. The summit was keynoted by Republican Presidential front-runner, former New York City Mayor, Rudy Giuliani. Giuliani’s address emphasized his record of accomplishment as Mayor of New York, and focused on his optimistic agenda of empowering individuals and expanding economic opportunities for all Americans – including Latinos. “Giuliani’s speech hit all the right notes among the Latino business leaders in attendance,” continued Deposada. “The Mayor demonstrated that he understands the Latino community and is committed to reaching out to this critical demographic in his run for President.”

Giuliani’s impact on the Latino business leaders in attendance was evident in the results of the summit’s Presidential Preference Straw Poll. Of the 415 ballots cast, 58% cast ballots for a Republican candidate. Among Republicans, Rudy Giuliani captured a commanding 64% of the votes. Senator John McCain (R-AZ) finished a distant second to Giuliani, garnering 15% of the vote. McCain was followed by former U.S. Senator Fred Thompson at 8%.

On the Democratic side, where 42% of the ballots were cast, the results were much closer. Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton (D-NY) received 30% of the votes cast, followed by New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson at 24%, and Senator Barack Obama (D-IL) with 12%.

Mayor Giuliani’s address to the summit was preceded by a powerful speech by Cuban-born/Venezuelan-raised actress Maria Conchita Alonso. Alonso delivered an emotional speech highly critical of Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez and Cuban dictator Fidel Castro. Alonso movingly noted in her speech that, “I come from Cuba, I know about the suffering they have been and are going through. I don’t want this to happen to Venezuela – to watch, once again, the destruction of my people.”

Alonso’s speech was so powerful that a writer for the influential National Review wrote, “If the Republicans are wise, they’ll invite Alonso to speak in the 2008 convention on this topic in prime-time. She’s *that* good.”

This year's summit was not, however, a partisan event. Latino business leaders were addressed by two leading Democratic politicians – Senator Ken Salazar (D-CO) and Congressman Luis Gutierrez (D-IL). Gutierrez's speech focused on a critical issue confronting our nation today - immigration reform. In particular the Congressman discussed his bipartisan immigration reform bill (co-sponsored with Congressman Jeff Flake (R-AZ)).

Attendees also enjoyed presentations by a number of key officials in the administration of President George W. Bush. Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson spoke to summit attendees at a White House briefing, and Commerce Secretary Carlos Gutierrez and Transportation Secretary Mary Peters both addressed this year's summit.

In addition to a strong line up of important political speakers, the summit boasted an impressive array of business leaders. This impressive array of leaders included Wellpoint CEO Angela Braly, head of the largest insurance company in the U.S., who spoke to summit attendees on Tuesday.

The Latino Coalition looks forward to building on the success of this year's summit. "As we close out the 2007 Small Business Economic Summit, The Latino Coalition looks forward to translating today's enthusiasm into tomorrow's results. The Latino Coalition will continue to lead the fight to develop and promote policies that will foster economic equivalency and enhance overall business, economic, and social development of Hispanics," said TLC Chairman Hector Barreto.

The Latino Coalition is a non-profit, non-partisan organization based in Washington, D.C. TLC was established to address policy issues that directly affect the well-being of Hispanics in the United States. TLC's agenda is to develop and promote policies that will foster economic equivalency and enhance overall business, economic, and social development of Hispanics. For more information please visit our website at www.TheLatinoCoalition.com.

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